



Summary Report:
Summit on Public Involvement in Public Education

Published April 2009

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This summary was prepared in support of the Alberta School Boards Association's 2009 *Putting the public back in public education* initiative. It is available on-line at www.asba.ab.ca
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Introduction

In 2008, the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) launched an initiative to help school boards find ways to put the public back into public education. This was in response to the lack of involvement in publicly funded education, particularly by those who do not have children in school. The ASBA believes reaching out to, informing and involving stakeholders is critical if excellence in public education is to be maintained.

The initiative involved a number of elements including:

- Outreach by individual school boards to solicit input from the public
- A literature review of public engagement best practices
- Focus groups across the province
- A telephone poll of 800 Albertans
- An on-line web survey
- A provincial *Summit on Public Involvement in Public Education* held March 13 & 14, 2009 at the Shaw Conference Center in Edmonton

This summary document deals with the discussions and conclusions of the more than 300 people who participated in the *Summit on Public Involvement in Public Education*. Prior to coming to the Summit, participants were asked to consider the results of ASBA's research and best practices review as "food for thought". These reports, as well as this summary, are available on ASBA's website.

The majority of Summit participants were members of the public. Other participants were elected trustees from school boards. Representatives from ASBA's educational partners were invited to observe. It marked the first time that the public and trustees from across the province came together to discuss how the public can be more engaged in what school boards do.

The Summit began March 13 with a reception and a keynote address by internationally recognized motivational speaker Jamie Vollmer. Saturday, March 14 was a workday with 17 small groups considering and responding to a series of pointed questions. See Appendix A for a detailed agenda outlining the facilitators' discussion points.

Outcomes from the *Summit on Public Involvement in Public Education* and other elements of ASBA's initiative will inform all school boards on how they can strengthen links with local citizens and communities, and work towards putting the public back into public education.

Executive Summary

Schools boards and the schools they govern cannot be effective without public input, involvement and support. Trustees must be connected and in touch with the communities they serve. The alternative is to take educated guesses at what people might want, what communities might need or what society thinks school boards should be doing.

Conversely, society must care about what local school boards are doing if they want excellence in public education. It is not healthy to have people without children in school – and many parents of school aged children – feeling disengaged from the school system that surrounds them, as that system has a substantial impact on their lives.

Summit participants spent an intense day looking at this challenge. What emerged was an honest assessment of current attitudes, barriers and opportunities. As importantly, they suggested strategies tools and initiatives for how Alberta school boards can help the public feel a stronger connection to public education.

There was an acknowledgement among Summit participants that everyone has a stake in public education. But while putting the public back into public education is important to us all, it was felt school boards need to take a lead role in making that happen.

Key messages that emerged from the Summit were direct and to the point. Those that resonated with most participants were:

- The engagement process should be a shared responsibility between trustees and stakeholders. Both parties need to participate, listen and be heard. Discussing an issue and desired outcomes must be a ‘we’ exercise.
- It shouldn’t be difficult to find out basic information or how to get involved. Many noted school board information tools including web sites are not user friendly.
- Create a welcoming environment. School board meetings, schools and other places open to the public don’t always feel that way.
- One size does not fit all. Find ways of communicating with stakeholders that makes it relevant, accessible and suitable for the recipients of the message or information.
- Create a meaningful and transparent purpose and process where the community is engaged at places and times that are convenient for them. Follow-up is critical!
- Always make awareness and knowledge a part of the engagement process. Take the time to educate the public about schools and school boards, particularly successes and challenges. The more the public knows the more likely people will want to get involved.

Five core strategies emerged from these and other inputs provided by participants.

1. Build awareness of public involvement in education, its benefits and impacts.
2. Establish connections and relationships with the public in ways that are convenient, attractive and accessible to them.
3. Develop effective, two-way communication methods that reach a variety of demographics and ensure transparency and accountability.
4. Increase community use and access of schools.
5. Establish partnerships with key community leaders and other stakeholders to encourage school and community collaboration and meaningful public involvement and input.

The Summit is not the end of a process for the ASBA but rather the beginning of the next step. The first step was to look within and admit that school boards need a stronger connection with its communities...and communities with school boards. The second was to reach out, ask questions and learn from others on how to improve. The Summit was part of that learning process.

The next step is to set into permanent practice those methods, initiatives and tools that will achieve the goal of putting the public back into public education. ASBA will assist school boards to address engagement barriers and opportunities, and to incorporate and implement many of the suggestions made at the Summit.

Public Engagement Strategies

In addition to considering best practices, Summit participants spent time in small groups identifying a host of initiatives and actions that they believed would encourage more public interest and involvement in public education. This brainstorming and sharing was clustered by each group into general strategies. These have been consolidated (according to similarity) into five core strategies. Initiatives or actions suggested by the small groups are listed under each strategy.

1. Build awareness of public involvement in education, its benefits and impacts.

Initiatives/Actions

- Make education a societal value. Emphasize the value of education to the public and how it ties to quality of life in the local community and society as a whole.
- Show the connection between self-interest and the public good. Outline how involvement can benefit the community not just the school system.
- Define the reasons and importance of public involvement. Teach me why it should matter to me. Describe the potential win.

- Remind businesses and local governments of their vested interest in education and their opportunity to be mentors and partners.
- Promote what is happening in schools and what they have to offer. Focus on positive school experiences.
- Invite the community to help define/determine success factors/criteria. Allow the public to help make some education financial decisions.
- Explain the budget process, trustee/school council roles and responsibilities, and issues for public input. Articulate needs for volunteer input and assistance at the board level.
- Engage in a conversation that gets people to think outside the box regarding education.
- Take advantage of existing settings to convey messages (i.e. grad ceremonies). Speak at public events. Showcase school events/student work in the community by hosting them away from the school.
- Promote access to school council and school board and voting rights.
- Augment school board trustees' job descriptions so it includes public engagement activities. Provide board members with training to increase people skills.
- Teach schools how to become allies with the public.
- Produce a 'state of the district' address and generate media interest in covering it.
- Communicate extensively. Deliver a handbill to each home with the basic information and facts about the school system. Provide weekly or monthly updates in the newspaper. Produce an "Ask a Trustee" column.

2. Establish connections and relationships with the public in ways that are convenient, attractive and accessible to them.

Initiatives/Actions

- Attract my attention. If you ask me, show me that you are listening to me.
- Allow all levels of engagement. Respect everyone's opinions. Honour a person's contribution.
- Be respectful of people's time. Express time frames for involvement (short or long). Make the time convenient for the public.
- Simplify information so everyone can read and understand the material.
- Design an initiative that the community will buy into. Make it fun and rewarding.
- Create a welcoming culture.
- Provide incentives to attend public meetings such as offering a meal, wine & cheese, free tickets to school plays and other events. Offer to pay or organize childcare or transportation.
- Go where the people are. Move programs outside of the school. Host community events (fun days, pancake breakfasts, seniors' days). Go to community venues to present or consult with the public (golf clubhouses, coffee shop, hockey rink, rec centres, seniors centres, Legion).
- Say thank you.
- Use independent facilitation when consulting.

- Trustees/the board should be visible at all times. Attend community events and be in the public spotlight. Attend trade shows and job fairs.
- Compensate people for volunteering. Host a Volunteer Day.
- Host focus groups on specific social issues for specific audiences. Arrange random dinner meetings. Hold a town hall meeting or open house. Hold regular planning sessions.
- Have a community outreach position at each school. Form Student Advisory Councils in each school.
- Use surveys to identify strengths and weaknesses.
- Trustees should attend school council meetings on a regular basis.
- Make school board meetings more 'public friendly'. Hot topics should be open to the public. Reduce in camera sessions.
- Increase the decision-making power of boards so they can be more responsive to community needs.
- Advertise for specific roles involvement. Host learning nights for parents/public.
- Facilitate intergenerational interaction.
- Consider introducing sharing circles. Develop and open a culture of dialogue.
- Have meetings without preset agendas.
- Consider using electronic voting at consultation sessions.

3. Develop effective, two-way communication methods that reach a variety of demographics and ensure transparency and accountability.

Initiatives/Actions

- Ensure proper and timely feedback by follow-up over time with information.
- Develop a good communications plan with the public. Have a person designated to take care of communications and ensure consistency.
- Build a database of people who express interest or ask for information.
- Eliminate jargon and acronyms.
- Use bulletin boards and community event calendars.
- Use consistent e-mails and keep websites current.
- Encourage completion of surveys by enabling completed surveys to be used as admission to fairs, sporting events, rodeos, etc.
- Extend personalized invitations from board members, staff or students (phone, e-mail, door-knocking, cards through direct mail).
- Use timely, accessible and multimedia forms of communication and provide multiple ways for the public to provide input (people friendly website, social media, on-line forums, Blogs, video billboards, PowerPoint, radio, newspaper, TV, word of mouth, signage, flyers, direct mail, web cast board meetings).
- Do bulk mail outs with board meeting dates, quick facts and opportunities to participate.
- Hold a great ideas contest.
- Do a trustee Q&A in the classroom.
- Have a travelling information booth that goes to malls, farmers' markets, etc.

- Create a set of education direction questions then ask the public for answers.
- Listen without being defensive.
- Include upcoming events in municipal bills and notices.
- Hold event or issue specific meetings. Hold board meetings throughout the district.

4. Increase community use and access of schools

Initiatives/Actions

- Integrate the school with other community and family activities.
- Develop joint use agreements.
- Provide co-location of services like libraries, day cares, health centres, and adult education.
- Allow out of season use and promote after hour use.
- Hold workshops inside the school of benefit and interest to the public.
- Open up the school for social activities. Hold family dances. Host block parties.
- Invite community clubs, seniors and others to school functions. Provide free tickets and transportation.
- Invite seniors to walk the halls as an exercise program.

5. Establish partnerships with key community leaders and other stakeholders to encourage school and community collaboration and meaningful public involvement and input.

Initiatives/Actions

- Be inclusive.
- Do a demographic study of the community. Identify and mentor future educational leaders.
- Develop board policy to encourage engagement of community leaders in education planning and activities.
- Change the decision-making structure so there is more accountability to the local community.
- Create ambassadors to promote public involvement. Form leadership teams.
- Form a public advisory group to the board that would meet several times per year.
- Create a position on the board to be responsible for communications.
- Have a community member on each board committee.
- Establish expert advisory committees (i.e. Aboriginal, health) to solicit community interests and concerns.
- Ask 'outstanding citizens' to dialogue on specific issues.
- Meet one-on-one with key people. Invite key leaders to board meetings.
- Set up senior/student mentorship programs in the community.
- Work with the media.
- Engage in joint efforts (e.g. host joint meetings) with municipalities, Community Futures, Chambers of Commerce, MLAs, etc.

- Invite community representatives of people without children in school on the Council of School Councils. Ensure school councils are run as mandated. Support regional school councils.
- Look at limiting terms for trustees.
- Involve students and families in lifelong stewardship activities (includes buildings and grounds).
- Invite and include students and parents in education planning.
- Join the Chamber of Commerce. Seek representation at interagency meetings.
- Invite businesses to participate but have clear expectations of the employer in RAP/work experience programs.
- Attend municipal, corporate and union meetings to discuss education. Build on existing regional initiatives.
- Invite service groups to volunteer in schools.
- Hire administrators who are educational leaders and will become involved in the community. Ensure the superintendent and school board trustees are on the same page.
- Increase power of school boards to be more responsive to community needs.
- Position the school board as non-partisan.
- Develop provincial priorities through local input (create a slogan and goals).
- Pick an issue, advertise and hold a referendum.
- Learn from others who have good public involvement practices.

Engaging the Public

Summit participants spent some time discussing what public engagement meant to them and why it was important to school boards and its various stakeholders that public engagement occurs. The small groups identified who should be involved and the benefits that would result from good public engagement practices.

Defining Engagement

- Providing an opportunity for the public to be involved in a process that leads to an informed decision. Giving the public a chance to be heard in a welcoming environment.
- Providing information to the public so they know how to get involved at the school, at school council or in planning.
- A two way dialogue that attempts to create win/win situations. Interactive communication.
- Educating as well as seeking feedback from all publics.
- Meaningful dialogue about ideas, facts and possible solutions.
- Facilitating change where outcomes are not predetermined.
- Sharing of power (empowerment).
- Bringing ideas forward to get a reaction.

- Asking questions and understanding how things work.
- Talking to trustees and initiating conversations.
- Building relationships. Building emotional attachments with families and other stakeholders.
- Building ownership and pride in the school system.

Who are we trying to engage?

- Those for whom the topic is relevant or they are personally affected. Those who will or may be impacted by a decision, including staff.
- Those who are silent, focusing on those who stay away from schools. Those without children in school.
- Cluster of people with similar interests and concerns.
- Good cross-section of the community.
- Residents of the school community. People who have lived in the community a long time.
- Businesses and industry (the level of decision making is important).
- Students/youth.
- Seniors.
- Local municipal government.
- Minority populations.
- Aboriginal community.
- Adult community. College/adult students.
- Parents.
- Media.
- Elected officials (MLAs, MPs).
- Churches, community organizations, service clubs and their leaders.
- Chamber of Commerce and employers.
- Our biggest allies. Experience dictates who you engage.

Why do it?

- Accountability. Everyone has a vested interest. The public has a right to be involved in a meaningful way; the 70% without kids in school are taxpayers too.
- Publicly governed systems must engage the public. As elected officials, it's our job. It makes boards proactive.
- It defines what the community wants from the system. A more aware and involved public will lead to more success. It creates greater support for public education.
- It's hard to plan for the future without public involvement. To determine what we want our future citizens to look like and be like. Helps identify gaps.
- Larger pool of wisdom, ideas, experience and expertise to draw from. Don't assume people in the school system have all the knowledge.
- It's a cost effective way to find solutions to issues.
- It helps to move from 'us versus them' to 'we'. Helps build community.

- It demonstrates what is good in our schools. This helps the community celebrate educational achievements.
- It discovers public perceptions on issues/informs public about school issues.
- Increased awareness equals increased engagement and understanding; builds capacity of understanding; increases satisfaction.
- It creates informed voters. This increases interest at election time.
- It activates the public as an advocacy resource for boards.
- It takes a village to raise a child. It connects youth with the community.
- It keeps rural communities alive – communities need schools.
- It provides continuity and history.
- It ensures the school system is extroverted and responsive.
- It reinforces critical importance of education in our society.
- It builds new partnerships and improves relationships with key partners.
- It's a moral obligation.
- It provides a return on investment.
- It contributes to a healthy society.

What are the Benefits?

- Schools evolve into more of a resource for the community.
- It clarifies misconceptions and misinformation. The public hears information from the source rather than from gossip.
- It builds trust and mutual understanding, respect and support.
- The public feels valued. This increases satisfaction.
- It increases knowledge of school board/teachers and their efforts. It clarifies roles and how much flexibility a school has.
- It lets the public know they are welcome in schools. It encourages use and involvement.
- More advocates for school boards might develop leading to a stronger voice for school boards.
- The board makes better informed decisions. It provides boards with a broader perspective than just special interests.
- It eliminates guess work. Boards make better and more informed decisions. They know they are doing the right things.
- Engenders a greater sense of community. Continued commitment strengthens the community and school system.
- Models appropriate involvement and interest for children.
- It shapes school culture.
- School boards gain an understanding of the public's perception of success. It provides school boards with different ideas.
- More people step forward to get involved. The community takes responsibility for helping to educate and raise child.
- It builds leaders for the future.
- Increased engagement gives people a sense of ownership and reasons to support board decisions. It gives a board broader support and more resources to deal with issues. It provides better relationships with stakeholders.

- Transparency. The public sees where its tax money is going.
- It gets everyone on the same page. It keeps the public in touch with schools - school boards in touch with the public.
- It validates administrative and board decisions. Board decisions are better received.
- It ensures local interests are reflected in decisions. It gives the public more influence over long term planning, how money is spent and what the priorities are.
- It improves education. Students benefit from a better system. It may lead to higher rates of student achievement and success.
- It contributes to a better quality of life in the community.
- It increases employment opportunities for students.
- It increases democracy. More people may run for the office of trustee.

Engagement Experiences, Barriers and Ideas

Most people have experienced public engagement exercises in the past – either as an organizer or as a participant. Summit participants were asked to describe both good and not-so-good experiences that they have had in the past and to offer their thoughts and ideas on barriers to public engagement. They then offered a number of suggestions and ideas on how the effectiveness of public engagement could be enhanced.

Good

- Planned with good facilitation. Gradual process done with integrity. Follow up done on input. Feedback provided to participants.
- Giving information out in advance. Information first then conversation with large groups at tables (world cafe) - diffuses strong voices.
- Input was valued and honoured. There was a tone of respect. Decision-makers listened with empathy.
- The participants helped drive the agenda. Brainstorming with no set agenda. Creative meeting agendas.
- Transparent process.
- Task and involvement expectations were explained very well. Short-term, specific topics set with an end in sight.
- Childcare/food/ honorarium offered in return for participation.
- A combination of open and targeted invitations. Information went out with the newspaper. Used telephone trees to spread the word.
- Town hall meetings. Student town halls. Open invitation public meetings. Community luncheons. Listening days. Pre-election forum.
- Speak Out process. Sirolli process (see Saskatchewan Economic Development Association).
- Technology with keypad input (electronic polling).
- Holding a youth and seniors session together.
- Career days. Volunteer banks. Mentorship program.

- Survey during parent/teacher interviews, contests, displays at school, websites with current information, focus groups.
- Networking – informal conversations/one-on-ones. Developed personal relationships.
- Strong leadership at all levels to open process. Got cooperation from schools and school administration.
- Public board meetings held in the community, on the public's 'turf'; moved Board meetings from school to school.
- Board held open meetings – not in camera.
- Coordinated with another group outside of school board.
- Beefs and Bouquets evening – informal setting.
- Public open house that used resource people for one-on-ones.
- E-mail input enabled.
- The timing of the year and day was selected based on what was convenient for stakeholders. Clear timing with set start and finish times.
- Joint school council with chair of school councils, one parent from each school and the board.

Not-so-good

- Poor communications or advertising beforehand.
- No follow-up or feedback.
- No action taken. Advice was ignored.
- High publicity without public interest because event was new.
- Consultation without engagement.
- Separate forums for separate groups. Not enough public or school representation.
- Trustee election forums.
- Bad timing – not convenient for public.
- Asked for input on something the board didn't want to do.
- Rubber stamping exercise. Decision was made before the public was asked for input. Asked for agreement after the fact. Engagement was just a public relations exercise.
- Unclear expectations for input. People didn't understand the context.
- Board took a bigger role in running and organizing the public meetings. Board got defensive or grandstanded.
- Unstructured meetings.
- Surveys with questions that were not understood.
- Lack of targeted information. Flyers sent to all homes.
- Input suppressed; people felt there were not free to speak.
- Forum or process not suitable for the topic being discussed. Small table discussions not suitable for consultation.
- Mixing fundraising with consultation. Recruiting volunteers at public meetings.
- Not enough time for discussion.
- Too much paperwork for participants.

Barriers to participation

- Too busy. Other commitments. Inconvenient for me.
- Apathy. Lack of interest. Not a priority.
- Lack of incentive or reward.
- No personal level of accountability. The topic doesn't relate to me. I don't see a benefit. Public needs an answer to the question: "What's in for me?" There is no bond to the process if you don't have kids in school.
- Burn out – same people attending all consultations.
- There is lack of information, communication and/or understanding regarding the problem or issue.
- The public places its trust and confidence in school board, government, schools or experts to do a good job.
- There is a lack of knowledge of how to get involved or provide input, particularly for people without kids in school. They don't know how and where to provide meaningful input.
- Never being asked directly. People feel left out of process when not approached.
- Fear of the unknown: Am I qualified or is my opinion valuable?
- Fear a person may be asked to do something or everything (fundraise, volunteer) once they get involved.
- People do not feel welcome or heard. There is no sense of belonging for people without children in school. May be push back from parents with children in school to involve people without children in school.
- Negative previous experiences. Doubts/mistrust about the intent of the process based on Board's poor track record. Perception that Board doesn't really want public's input. Board is not considered approachable.
- Lack of follow through. People are frustrated that input goes nowhere and process starts from scratch two years later.
- Not reflecting the input in the summary report. Not using participants' language.
- Often participants are asked to meet unreasonable deadlines (too short).
- One way communication.
- Time. Time of day. Meetings during the weekday.
- Expense.
- Childcare issues.
- Venue/location. Lack of transportation. Distance to travel.
- Language barrier. Not just for those where English is a second language but also those who have difficulty with jargon, acronyms and complicated language.
- Single parents. There is no support from others enabling them to be involved.
- There is a belief that people can't influence change.
- Sense that my duty has already been done (I was active when my kids were in school).
- Schools are seen as separate from the community and don't have a welcoming environment.
- People are intimidated by teachers, trustees, other parents, the complexity of issues or the system, or the method being used.

- Internal resistance to change. The board or administration lacks the desire for public input. There is a lack of encouragement from involved parents ('us versus them' attitude).
- The board's lacks engagement capacity and skills.
- Navigating the system.
- Illiteracy.
- Poor agenda. No clear reason or purpose to meetings. Rules of engagement not in place.
- Challenges of different schools and personnel. Parents may live in different neighbourhood then where their child goes to school.
- Different expectations and different ideas regarding outcomes.
- Different kinds of engagement are needed for different stakeholders. Matching different viewpoints is difficult.
- Difficult to reach certain populations.
- Cultural differences.
- Fear a child or person will be labelled a problem because a person is vocal.
- FOIPP information restrictions are not transparent.
- Concern about hidden agendas.
- People insist on getting their way. Not interested in consensus.
- Non-supportive media. Negative media stories fuel sense that input is not valued.
- School structure, rules and regulations.
- Absence of direct taxation link to schools.

Ideas to enhance engagement

- Have dedicated resources and identify who is leading the process.
- Build a profile of your community so you know who you want/need to engage. Identify what is lacking in the community before doing an engagement exercise.
- Be clear regarding the purpose and what is meant by a public engagement process. Train/teach the public about public engagement processes. Have a clear purpose of what will be accomplished and extend a personal invitation.
- Provide people with a short term benefit for their involvement, a quick positive outcome for their input.
- Keep people informed of the progress of the matter – from first input point until the matter is resolved.
- Hold meetings that are at the right time and place, focused, resourced and on schedule.
- Empower people to translate input into action. Create a culture of being good community ambassadors.
- Use a variety of mediums including social media (Facebook) to reach out to people. Use more technology like e-mail and video-conferencing as tools to enhance engagement.
- Keep the conversations going beyond the end of the meeting.
- Expand consultation to include more than just parents.

- Target the strengths and highlight the ways specific individuals or groups can help or get involved. Provide small involvement opportunities for those with limited time and/or special skills and perspectives.
- Build relationships with the media.
- Speak to and discuss issues at community association meetings.
- Learn to use opportunities in everyday situations; take advantage to inform and discuss issues.
- Involve elders.
- Host grandparents' only meetings.
- Do public engagement in conjunction with municipal leaders.
- Use community liaison workers and translators to bridge language and cultural gaps.
- Use unbiased facilitators.
- Invite people without kids in school to school events.
- School Council meetings – trustees need to be there.
- Listen twice as much as you talk.
- Do evaluations of satisfaction after engagement activities.

Public Engagement Topics

Summit participants were asked to recall public education topics that the public has had past interest in or may be interested in discussing with school boards in the future. They were also asked to suggest topics that they would consider priorities for dialogue with the public.

General topics

- Student achievement testing/achievement test results/report cards.
- Health check-up in schools/vaccinations.
- After school outreach.
- Buildings and facilities issues/construction/P3s/portables.
- Traffic.
- Student field trips.
- Concerts and theatre productions.
- Use of gambling revenue.
- Bussing. Changing a boundary or bus route.
- Citizenship/student behaviour towards others. Bullying. Discipline. Peer pressure.
- Contracting out/staffing issues/teacher dismissals or evaluations/school resource officers.
- Security. Crisis response. Lockdowns.
- Classroom size. Declining/increasing enrolment.
- Dress codes, cell phones and vending machines in school.
- Fundraising.

- School of choice.
- Programs offered in school. Curriculum. English as a second language. Counselling and youth programs. Life skills. Special education. Aboriginal education. Sex education.
- Disposition of municipal school reserves. Land use.
- Educational priorities of the district. School board policies. Protocols for safe, caring students and schools and handling public or parent concerns.
- High school completion rates/drop-out rate.
- Immigration.
- Importance of social skills and development in children.
- Issues that prevent active, healthy children. Nutrition.
- Religion in school.
- School closures or openings.
- Budget/funding formula. School fees.
- School year – length and changes.
- Technology.
- Scholarships and bursaries for RAP/apprenticeships/continuing education.

Priority topics for engagement

- Defining basic education and the quality of education. What it is that schools should be responsible for? What works? What should schools give up doing? Should public education involve adult education? Why should someone without children in school continue to pay taxes to support the school system?
- What is success at school? How is it measured? The relevance of education, curriculum and school to the community. How we should use schools to build communities and the community should be involved with schools.
- What should be the responsibilities of teachers and schools versus the responsibilities of parents and the community?
- Hot issues in the community related to education.
- Identifying priorities and gaps. Strategic planning regarding the future.
- The accountability and roles of Alberta Education, school boards and school councils.
- Vandalism, crime and drugs.
- Safety issues in school and in the community.
- Child readiness for school. Newcomer families' special needs.
- Funding formulas.
- Behaviour modelling and teaching respect and responsibility for fellow human beings.
- The transition from school to work. The preparation of students for the workforce.
- Parental involvement in changes to the leadership in school.
- Society's expectation of graduates. What do graduates need to know? What does a student in 2020 need to be successful?
- Programming outside of the core programs.
- Assessment tools like provincial achievement tests.
- School zoning.
- How to influence communication from school boards to Alberta Education.

APPENDIX A

Summit Agenda with Facilitators' discussion points

Alberta School Boards Association
Summit on Public Involvement in Public Education
March 13 & 14, 2009

Friday, March 13, 2009 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

- ◆ Welcome - Summit Chair Heather Welwood
- ◆ Opening Remarks - Minister of Education David Hancock
- ◆ Guest Speaker - Jamie Vollmer
- ◆ Reception

Saturday, March 14, 2009 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Plenary

- ◆ Welcome/opening remarks by Summit Chair
 - ◆ Powerpoint Presentation of research/inputs
 - ◆ Lead Facilitator describes small group proceedings, agenda, guiding principles
-

Small Group Discussions

- ◆ Small Group Welcome/Introductions/Purposes
- ◆ Go Over Small Group Topic Discussion Areas and Timings
- ◆ Reference Working Principles
- ◆ Learnings from keynote, presentation and the documents developed for the Summit.
- ◆ **Why Do We Need To Engage/Involve The Public In Public Education?**
Purpose: Exploring the Importance of Listening to and Engaging the Public
 - What do we mean by engagement?
 - Who are we trying to engage?
 - Why do we seek public engagement? Why is it important? Why might it be necessary to engage the folks without children in the public education system?
 - What are the benefits of public engagement for school boards; for the public?
- ◆ **What Have Been Your Experiences Engaging the Public and/or Participating in Public Engagement Processes?**
Purpose: Sharing Participant Experiences in Public Engagement to Identify Best Approaches
- ◆ **When you have participated in, observed or been part of the development and delivery of a public engagement process:**
 - What worked well?
 - What was not-so-hot?
 - What approaches/processes have you been part of/seen? How were they done?

- What might have been missed? Where were there gaps? What could have been done differently?
- ◆ **What Are Topics Of Interest in Public Education?**
 - Purpose: Identify Key Topic Interests for Public Education Engagement Processes*
 - What topic areas have you seen discussed in public education engagement processes in education?
 - What topics might interest the public in which little or no public engagement has occurred?
 - What do we *really need* public input on in public education?
- ◆ **What Are Barriers To Participation and Involvement In Public Education**
 - Purpose: Identify Barriers and Challenges that Prevent the Public/Folks without Children Participating in Public Education*
 - What barriers and challenges exist that make it difficult for anyone to provide input or being involved?
 - What barriers and challenges exist that make it difficult for parents with children in school to stay informed or get involved beyond their child's school?
 - What barriers and challenges exist that make it difficult for folks without children in school to stay informed and get involved in public education?
- ◆ **How could school boards reach out and get the public more involved in public education including those folks without children in the public education system?**
 - What is it that School Boards could do and for what purpose?
 - Prioritize Strategies
 - Of all the strategies we developed what are the top 3 strategies that you feel would have the most impact in getting the public more involved in public education?
- ◆ **Debrief**
 - What are the key messages we want to convey to ASBA from discussions and work in our small group?
 - What stands out from our group work? What will you remember about the small group work in your Summit experience?
 - What learnings, insights, new information and perspectives do you take away from the small group work?
 - How would you describe your Summit experience as a whole?

Plenary

- ◆ Summit Chair
- ◆ Theme Weaver Observations (Jamie Vollmer)
- ◆ Wrap up